Reasons and Passions

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Reasons and Passions

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The pleasure and excitement of first reading "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" are unforgettable. It is one of those rare articles that immediately strikes one as at the same time quite novel and yet clearly to be uncovering something that is obviously true, something that, without realizing it, we had been thinking all along. That article stimulated renewed attention to the question of when an action or mental state "belongs" to a person, and Frankfurt himself went on to pursue this question in a series of fine articles. He puts the problem very clearly in "Identification and Externality."

> We think it correct to attribute to a person, in the strict sense, only some of the events in the history of his body. The others—those with respect to which he is passive—have their moving principles outside him, and we do not identify him with these events. Certain events in the history of a person's mind, likewise, have their moving principles outside of him. He is passive with respect to them, and they are likewise not to be attributed to him. A person is no more to be identified with everything that goes on in his mind, in other words, than he is to be identified with everything that goes on in his body. Of course, every movement of a person's body is an event in his history; in this sense it is his movement, and no one else's. In this same sense, all the events in the history of a person's mind are his too. If this is all that is meant, then it is undeniably true that a passion can no more occur without belonging to someone than a movement of a human body can occur without being someone's movement. But this is only a gross literal truth, which masks distinctions that are as valuable in the one case as they are in the other.[1]

Frankfurt is here criticizing a view put forward by Terence Penelhum, which emphasized the idea of "ownership" of one's mental states according to which everything in a person's mental life "belongs to him." In this passage Frankfurt is suggesting that there is a "strict sense" of attributability, narrower than the one Penelhum emphasizes, on which we should concentrate.

This sense of attributability, or internality, is the quarry in many of Frankfurt's articles, and it has proved to be an elusive one. In this paper I want to explore, in a tentative fashion, the question of why we should be interested in finding this quarry. It seems to me that there are at least two quite distinct kinds of reason for this concern, and that when they are distinguished the problem may look less difficult than it has seemed.

When we are trying to characterize this narrower sense in which an action or attitude may or may not "belong to" an agent, we may be doing so with either, or both, of two aims in view. The first of these aims is to arrive at an understanding of the conditions under which an action or attitude is properly attributed to an agent as part of the basis for some assessment, moral or otherwise. When is an action or attitude something for which an agent is properly given credit or criticism? This is, of course, a question that can arise for the agent him or herself, since we can appraise our own conduct and character. But the second aim that I have in mind is one that is rooted more particularly in concerns of the agent. The question here is what makes a desire or other attitude fully a person's own—his own in the sense that makes it constitutive of who he is?

Each of these questions can be put in terms of freedom, or of an agent's control over his actions and attitudes. The first is: what kind of control does an agent have to exercise over an action or attitude in order for the agent to be morally responsible for it (in order for it to figure in the proper grounds for moral or other appraisal of that agent)? The second question might be *answered* in terms of freedom: it may be said that what makes our actions, desires and attitudes truly ours is that we have the right kind of control over them. But this is not the only possible answer: desires may be said to be truly part of us in virtue of their role in our lives, or their relation to our other desires, rather than because they are freely adopted, or freely held.

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[1] *The Importance of what We Care About*, p. 61.

In the case of Frankfurt's famous unwilling addict, the two questions I have distinguished coincide: the addict is not morally responsible for taking the drug, and he suffers from a kind of internal unfreedom that is bad from his own point of view. Frankfurt gives us terminology to mark this distinction: the addict both acts unfreely and lacks free will, understood as the ability to have the will he wants. In the case of the willing addict the two come apart. The willing addict is morally responsible for taking the drug because he acts freely in doing so. But he lacks free will, since it is only a coincidence that the desire he acts from is one he wants to act on. In these cases the kind of conflict or control that is at issue in having "free will" is a matter of the relation between the addicts' first-order desires and their higher-order volitions. In his later articles, however, Frankfurt raises a similar question about the relation between these higher-order elements: an agent's having the will he wants is a matter of his identifying wholeheartedly with some of these elements rather than others.

It has struck me in rereading Frankfurt's articles that over the twenty-five years that they cover there has been a shift of emphasis from the first of these questions to the second—from concern with an agent's "ownership" of his or her desires as a precondition of moral appraisal to a concern with an ideal of psychic health. In his early articles, a certain relation between first and second order desires is seen as a criterion of freedom. In his later work, a certain attitude toward our various desires—wholeheartedness—is investigated as something desirable in itself, quite independent of questions of freedom and of moral responsibility. What unites these works, however, is the question of when a desire or other attitude "belongs to" a person, and this is the question I want to examine.

I

I will begin by trying to distinguish various senses in which a state or action might "belong to me" and will then consider the kind of significance that is to be attached to belonging or not belonging in these different senses. In order to discuss the senses in which something may belong to me, however, I have to begin with a few thoughts about who or what I am.

I am, I take it, a conscious, rational, embodied creature. As a conscious creature, I have a stream of conscious thoughts and experiences. This stream is not continuous—it is interrupted by deep sleep and other periods of unconsciousness—but it is united by a degree of constancy in its elements, by the intentional content of these elements, and by its supposed causal basis. By the first of these, "constancy," I mean such things as the high degree of continuity in my cognitive and affective reactions: in what I like and dislike, in what I believe and reject. By the second, I have in mind the way in which elements of my conscious life refer to each other, as when it seems to me that I am remembering a past experience or decision or carrying out a previously formed intention. It is a controversial question in discussions of personal identity whether the third element—the continuity of the causal basis of my mental life, has independent significance as a determinant of my identity. I will not take a stand on this general issue. But some particular ways in which the causal basis of one's experiences may be relevant to their significance will figure in what I have to say later on.

As Frankfurt points out at the beginning of "Identification and Wholeheartedness," my mental life is not limited to my conscious life. Beliefs and aversions, for example, may be correctly attributed to me—may "belong to me in the sense or senses we are here concerned with—even though I am never aware of them. Despite this lack of awareness, they can be correctly attributed to me because they are the

best explanation of my overall behavior—not only of what I do and think, but also of what I fail to think of.

As rational creatures, we are capable of making judgments about reasons and hence of having judgment-sensitive attitudes such as belief and intention.[2] In calling these attitudes judgment-sensitive, I do not mean to suggest that they always arise from conscious judgment. My point is, rather, that it is part of the nature of such attitudes that, insofar as we are rational, we come to have them when we judge ourselves to have compelling reason of the relevant kind to do so, and cease to have them when we judge there to be compelling reason against them.

Three features of our mental lives as rational creatures are particularly relevant for my purposes. First, it can seem to us that a certain consideration is a reason for some action or attitude. It may seem to me, for example, that the way a chocolate dessert would taste is a reason for having one tonight, or it can seem to me, when I am feeling annoyed with my colleague, that the fact that a certain incident presents him in a bad light is a reason for mentioning it in the department meeting. Second, as rational creatures we are capable of judging whether considerations that seem to us to be reasons actually are good reasons. I may decide, for example, that I do have good reason to have the chocolate dessert and that presenting my colleague in a bad light is not a good reason for referring to that incident in the department meeting. Third, it is often the case that we have what we judge to be sufficient reason for adopting any one of several attitudes or actions, and we are capable of choosing one of these over the others, for example, by adopting a certain aim, or forming an intention to pursue an aim in one way rather than another. For example, I may take myself to have good reason for pursuing any one of several careers. Given these reasons, I can adopt one of them rather than the others,

and the fact that I have done, this affects the reasons I have, in the future, to do what is required in order to pursue it. I will refer to these familiar elements in our mental lives as, respectively, seemings, assessings, and optings.

These familiar elements in a rational creature's mental life are what they are not only in virtue of their phenomenal content when considered in isolation, but also in virtue of their normative and descriptive relations with other elements. If I have adopted the intention of doing something at a certain time, and have not reconsidered this, then, insofar as I am rational I do that thing at that time. If I have judged a certain consideration to count in favor of a certain intention or belief, then insofar as I am rational this consideration generally occurs to me as relevant when I am considering whether to adopt that attitude, and if I judge a consideration to be irrelevant to a certain attitude, then if I am rational I do not count it in favor of adopting that attitude. If I opt for a certain goal or intention, then insofar as I am rational this will seem to me to be a reason for acting in ways required to carry it out.

These connections are not only a matter of consistency in conscious judgment but also a matter of what might be called the relation between my conscious and unconscious life. My taking something to be a reason is not just a matter of its seeming to me to be a reason when I present the question to myself and consciously reflect on it. The fact that I take or do not take something to be a reason—the fact that I do or do not think my wife's feelings are important, for example—will also show up in what occurs to me or fails to occur to me, in what I notice and fail to notice, and in what I feel and do "without thinking."

These connections have both a descriptive and a normative aspect. Descriptively, if these connections and others like them did not hold of me to a significant degree, then I would not be a

[2] I present more fully the view of rationality that is summarized in this and the following four paragraphs in Chapter 1 of *What We Owe to Each Other* (Cambridge, Mass.:

rational creature, and attitudes of the kind I have described would not be attributable to me. But, considered normatively, these connections constitute a standard of perfect rationality that I often fall short of. I am only very imperfectly rational. I often fail to do what I judge myself to have compelling reason to do, and, more frequently than I would like, I count as reasons for action or other attitudes considerations that I actually believe do not, under the circumstances, count in favor of those attitudes. Considerations can seem to me to be reasons even when I have judged that they are not.

Much more would of course need to be said to flesh out and defend this view of rationality. With these rather hasty observations as background, however, I want to return to the question of the various ways in which an attitude might or might not be attributable to me, and to the kinds of significance these attributions can have. I will start with the broadest contrast between two ways in which some action or attitude might be said to "belong to me." The first is the sense involved in what Frankfurt called the "gross literal truth" that every passion and every action belongs to someone. This is the sense in which everything is attributable to me that occurs in my conscious life or figures in the best overall explanation of my conscious life and behavior. The class of things attributable to me in this broad sense includes conscious states such as judgments and decisions, visual perceptions, itches and pains, and also unconscious desires and beliefs that move me to do what I do. As I am understanding it, this sense of attributability is neutral as to the causes of these states. If any thoughts or desires have been produced in me by neuroscientists stimulating my brain, these are mine in the sense I am now describing, along with thoughts, itches, and pains produced in "normal" ways.

In contrast to this broad sense of attributability, at the opposite extreme, is an idea of attributability according to which what is attributable to me are just my conscious choices,

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Harvard University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 18-25.

decisions, and the actions I am aware of performing. These, it might be said, are the things that I *do*, as opposed to others that merely occur in my mental life.

It is easy to see why this class should seem particularly important if what we are interested in is the class of things that are attributable to a person for purposes of *moral* assessment. Since moral appraisal is appraisal of the way a person has governed him or herself—appraisal which, for example, asks the person to explain his or her reasons for acting a certain way and to justify or make amends for that action—an agent's conscious decisions are obviously of *particular* relevance for such appraisal. They are things for which he or she most obviously cannot escape responsibility. It is, however, a further question whether these are the *only* things that are attributable to a person in the sense that is a precondition for moral appraisal (let alone for other important purposes.) In fact, it is clear that this class is too narrow even for moral purposes. Negligence is a trivial example: we can be open to moral criticism for failing to take due care even when this reflects no conscious decision on our part. What negligence often consists in is just this: failure even to consider whether we were in a situation in which care needed to be taken. But the cases that are most likely to come to mind here are ones in which the negligence for which we are open to criticism involves action. We are criticized for what we do, or fail to do. It is a more controversial question whether we are open to moral criticism for attitudes that arise in us spontaneously, without any decision on our part, when these are contrary to the judgment we make when we consider the matter reflectively, and when this attitude has no influence on our action, perhaps because it is our reflective judgment rather than our immediate and unreflective reaction which governs our behavior. As Thomas Nagel says, "A person may be greedy, envious, cowardly, cold, ungenerous, unkind, vain, or conceited, but *behave* perfectly by

a monumental act of will."[3] I believe that states such as these are attributable to a person in the sense we are presently concerned with. I believe that they are relevant to a moral assessment even if he disapproves of, rejects, and controls them, and would eliminate them if he could. (It remains, of course, a further question in *what way* they should affect this assessment—how serious a fault this is, and how it compares with other failings.)[4]

Described in the language I introduced above, Nagel's examples involve people to whom certain considerations regularly seem to be reasons for action even though they consistently judge on reflection that these are not good reasons. Even if it is conceded that such seemings "belong to the person" in the sense required for moral appraisal, there is the further question why this is so. Two related but distinguishable explanations occur to one. The first emphasizes the fact that even though these particular attitudes are, *ex hypothesi*, not under this particular agent's control, they are the kind of thing that should, ideally, be responsive to his or her considered judgment—would be responsive to it if he or she were fully rational. As states that fall within the rational authority of the person's judgment, they are things he or she is answerable for.

The second explanation ignores (or at least does not directly appeal to) ideas of authority or control. It appeals rather to two other kinds of facts. The first is that the state in question is, we are assuming, one that does occur to the agent and occurs to him or her with some regularity. The second is that this state is of a kind that we have reason to care about: that whether these things seem to a person to be reasons or not is a factor that is significant in some way for our relations with him or her. These two explanations are closely related. States of the kind I have in mind have the significance just alluded to because they involve taking something to be a reason.

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[3] "Moral Luck," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 32.

Insofar as they are such states they are the *kind* of thing that is in principle subject to control by the agent's judgment. But they retain their significance even when this control is, in fact, absent. The fact that a person rejects a certain attitude—hatred or greed, for example—when it occurs to him makes a difference to our moral assessment of him. But the fact that it regularly occurs still makes a difference as well, whether or not it has any effect on his actions.

This is even more obvious if we shift from moral appraisal to the appraisal of someone as a friend or lover. We might imagine, for example, a man who is in no doubt as to whether his wife's feelings and interests are important to him. Nevertheless these considerations do not present themselves to him spontaneously as reasons. When he is making plans with others, he does not automatically consider how his wife would be affected and what she would prefer. But he is aware of this weakness, and carefully monitors himself—reminding himself to go back and consider how his wife would feel before making a final commitment. No doubt his wife would appreciate this if she knew about it, but I do not think she would be overly demanding if she regretted that it was necessary, and thought this a fault in her otherwise admirable spouse. What she would like best, not unreasonably, would be a husband to whom her interests occurred immediately and instinctively as important considerations.

In moral assessment, as in this example of spousal loyalty and concern, both reflective and unreflective attitudes matter. Their relative significance may, however, be different in the two cases. The morality that applies between strangers, we might say, is in an important sense *about* self-regulation, and we expect it to involve checking one's immediate responses. Certain kinds of negative attitudes toward others are moral faults, but it is an important and expected function of moral awareness to control such feeling. We do not expect purity from everyone.

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[4] This is argued very effectively by Angela Smith in *Agency, Attitude, and Responsibility* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University 1999). I am much indebted to her for discussion of

Relations of love and friendship are another matter. It is not just that we owe those we love a kind of concern that others cannot expect. It is also important (not just an ideal) that this kind of concern should be, to a large degree, a matter of immediate and spontaneous feeling.

So the relative significance of spontaneous response and reflective judgment is different in the two cases. Given the importance of spontaneous reactions in the case of friendship, however, it would be odd to say that these reactions do not fully belong to the person. If, in the moral case, these reactions are less significant than reflective judgments, this must be for some other reason.

This leads me to conclude that the elements of a person's mental life that are atrributable to him or her in the sense required for them to be potential grounds of moral assessment include, at least, all of a person's judgment sensitive attitudes. (Indeed, the argument I have just concluded may suggest that more than this is included. The attitudes we have reason to care about in those whom we love may include some that are not judgment-sensitive. If so, then if these are not morally significant it cannot be because they do not *belong* to the person.)

So let's turn to the other extreme—the broadest sense in which every element of a person's mental life "belongs to him." Are there things that are part of a person's mental life in this broadest sense but that we should say do not "belong to the person"—are not properly attributable to him—in the sense that is relevant to moral criticism or to other related forms of assessment, such as assessment as a friend?

What about itches and pains, for example? That a person feels an itch or a pain is clearly not a morally significant fact about him. But why is this so? Such sensations are not morally significant because they do not have the right content—they do not indicate anything about the person's attitudes towards others. It is also true that they are not the kind of things that even in an

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this topic.

ideally rational agent would be under the control of reflective judgment. So we cannot draw any conclusions from their occurrence about judgments that the person holds. But what is primary here—the lack of significant content or lack of control?

To answer this question, it may help to consider our reactions to science-fiction examples in which mental states are produced by neural stimulation, since these are, it is imagined, states with potentially significant content but without the right kind of control. Suppose a neuroscientist were, by stimulating a person's brain in the right way, to cause him, momentarily, to feel deep hatred for certain people and to see harm to them as something to be promoted. I think we would all agree that the occurrence of these feelings is not morally significant. Why not? One reason is that the fact that he responds to neural stimulation in this way does not tell us anything interesting about this person. Anyone would react in the same way. Moreover, what we are told about the causal origin of this response means that the fact that he responds in this way gives us no basis for inference about what the person was "really like" at other times, hence no reason to reexamine or reinterpret his past behavior.

But now suppose that the effect of what the neuroscientist does is more than momentary. She changes the person so that in future he becomes upset and angry whenever he sees the people in question and angry when he hears that things are going well for them. Perhaps he still believes, on reflection, that these feelings are unjustified and morally disreputable, but he has them nonetheless. This would, I believe, constitute a morally significant change in what the person is like. He has become a worse person, morally speaking, just as much as he would have if the change had occurred "naturally" that is to say, without the neuroscientist's intervention, perhaps as an overreaction to some bitter disappointment combined with some unpleasant

interactions with members of the group in question. What matters is the content of the attitudes, not their origin or susceptibility to rational control.

II

I want now to consider how the framework I have described for discussing these matters compares with that employed by Frankfurt in various of the papers in the series I have mentioned.

In "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" he operates mainly with the notion of desires of different orders. Desires of the first order seem to be understood, as far as I can see, simply as motivationally efficacious states. Higher-order desires differ from first-order ones simply in having a different kind of object. The object of a first-order desire is some state of affairs that one might bring about through action. The object of a second-order desire is also a state of affairs, but in this case a state that involves one's having or not having some first-order desire. A second-order volition is a particular kind of second-order desire, namely a desire that a particular first-order desire be the one that moves us to action. But while second-order desires and volitions are distinguished in this way by their objects, they remain, it seems, desires—that is to say, simply motivationally efficacious states. So a second order volition that I act out of loyalty is a state that moves me to bring it about that I act in this way.

First-order desires can conflict with each other when their objects are incompatible. Second-order desires can conflict in this way with first-order desires (my desire to act out of loyalty may conflict with my desire to avoid danger, if what loyalty prompts me to do is to take a risk.) But second-order desires, or at least second-order

volitions, can conflict with first-order desires in a further way, namely the way in which a first-order desire can conflict with a force in the world that works to prevent its fulfillment. Just as, for example, a shift in the tide can conflict with my desire to sail to the harbor quickly, by making this desire more difficult to satisfy, so my desire for safety can conflict with my second-order volition to act out of loyalty, by making it more difficult for me to do this.

Neither of these forms of conflict is the same as the kind of conflict that can occur between what I called above a seeming and an assessment—that is to say, the kind of conflict that occurs when it seems to me that showing my colleague in a bad light is a reason for mentioning a certain incident in a department meeting but I judge this not in fact to be a good reason for doing so. In order for this kind of conflict to be possible, the conflicting elements must involve conflicting claims, not just incompatible motivational tendencies or ways the world might be. Desires can enter into such conflicts if, as I suggested above, they involve "seemings"—if having a desire that X involves taking some feature of X to make it worth pursuing, but I do not see how they can do so otherwise.

Frankfurt's terminology in later work is somewhat different from what I have described above. In "Identification and Wholeheartedness", for example, he responds to Watson's charge that decisive identification with a desire seems arbitrary by emphasizing that what he calls "decisive commitment" should be understood as a decision, and one that the agent makes for a reason.[5] It is noteworthy, I think, that Frankfurt then goes on to distinguish two kinds of conflict between desires. Conflict of the first kind occurs when two desires compete for priority. Each is trying to prevail in the struggle to determine the

agent's course of action, and the resolution of this conflict requires the establishment of an order between them. One of them must take precedence in the determination of action, but even when this is established both remain, in the fullest sense, the agent's desires. Conflict of the second kind is deeper. Its resolution, he says, "involves a radical *separation* of the competing desires, one of which is not merely assigned a relatively less favored position but excluded entirely as an outlaw."[6]

Frankfurt does not say exactly what he has in mind here, but the examples that come to my mind are conflicts of the deeper sort described above, which I called conflicts between seemings and assessments. If I judge that, on reflection, what seemed to me to be a reason for a certain attitude is not in fact such a reason, then my initial tendency to see it as a reason is overruled, and in this sense rendered an "outlaw." Conflict may remain, however, if the "outlaw" attitude does not surrender but remains within the person's psychic territory, defiant. This kind of conflict is certainly a common feature of our mental lives. The question is how it is best described

Frankfurt is clear that this kind of conflict can occur only between higher-order desires. He says, in ""The Faintest Passion" that "conflicts involving first-order psychic elements alone—for example, between an attraction and an aversion to the same object—do not pertain to the will at all. They are not volitional but merely impulsive or sentimental. Conflicts that pertain to the will arise out of a person's higher-order, reflective attitudes."[7] But if first-order desires count as such "first-order psychic elements" and are thus merely impulses or sentiments, it seems to follow not only that they cannot conflict with each other in a deeper sense but that they cannot *conflict with*

[5] *The Importance of What We Care About*, p. 168.
[6] Ibid., p. 170.

higher-order volitions either. If first-order desires are only competing impulses and do not involve "seemings" then they cannot be overruled and hence cannot be declared to be "outlaws," except in the sense in which my fatigue is an outlaw if it interferes with my ability to do what I take myself to have reason to do.

This suggests to me the possibility that I may have, for years, been misreading Frankfurt's talk of first- and second-order desires. As I have said, I understand a desire, in the most familiar and ordinary sense, as involving a tendency to see some consideration as a reason. This seems to me to fit with my experience of "conflict situations": even when I declare some desire, such as the desire for another drink, to be an "outlaw" the kind of force that it continues to have involves not just an unruly impulse but a tendency to see something as a reason. So I have always understood Frankfurt's example of the unwilling addict on this same model. I assumed that this addict is moved to take the drug by the thought of how good it would feel to do so, and that the pleasure, and relief from his pain, that taking the drug would bring keep presenting themselves to him as reasons to shoot up, even though he judges, without reservation, that these are not, under the circumstances, good reasons. But of course there is a more radical understanding of the case, according to which the addict feels a strong urge to take the drug but sees no reason to do so. When he takes the drug, he is thus not acting on a reason at all, but only being overpowered by an impulse. I would not deny that there could be such a case, but it seems much more unusual than the phenomenon I have (mistakenly, I now think) understood the example to describe. Moreover, if desires are understood in the way this reading of the example suggests—as mere impulses—this seems to deprive them of the

[7] *Necessity, Volition and Love*, p. 99.

normative force we are accustomed to attribute to them in both conflict and non-conflict cases.

But this view of first-order desires does seem to be the one that Frankfurt takes in other work as well. In "Autonomy, Necessity and Love," for example, he says that passions such as jealousy and craving "do not include any affirmative or negative volitional attitudes toward the motivational tendencies they in which they consist." He then continues,

> However imposing or intense the motivational *power* that the passions mobilize may be, they have no inherent motivational *authority*. In fact, the passions do not really make any *claims* upon us at all. Considered strictly in themselves, apart from whatever additional impetus or facilitation we ourselves may provide by acceding to them, their effectiveness in moving us is entirely a matter of *sheer brute force.* There is nothing in them other than the magnitude of this force that requires us, or that even encourages us, to act as they command."[8]

It seems, then, that for Frankfurt, although first- and second-order desires are both called *desires*, they are really quite different sorts of things—different in the kind of authority they claim and in the ways they can conflict. My view of desires (*sans phrase*) is akin to Frankfurt's view of higher-order desires. I believe that it is essential to what we most commonly call a desire that having a desire involves something's seeming to us to be a reason. So, for example, when I feel a desire for a piece (or a second piece) of rich chocolate cake, its delicious taste and the pleasure it would give me seem to me to be reasons for eating it. When I feel a desire for revenge against my rival, the fact that

something I could do would cause him embarrassment strikes me as a reason to do it. Not every case of something seeming to me to be a reason is a case of desire, however. I can see that the fact that exercise would improve my health is a reason to engage in it. But I have no desire to exercise. My wife, on the other hand, exercises for the reason just mentioned—to improve her health—and she has a strong desire to do so. The difference between us, at least in part, is that the prospect of improving her health in this way presents itself to her insistently and effectively as a reason. She has what I call a desire in the directed-attention sense. But while this fact of directed-attention explains the motivational difference between us, it is not itself a source of motivation. What moves her is a consideration she takes to be a reason—the prospect of improving her health.

Given that I hold this view, Frankfurt's characterization of what is absent from these passions as he understands them strikes me as peculiar. He says that passions "do not include any affirmative or negative volitional attitude toward the motivational tendencies in which they consist." This suggests that what is missing from a passion itself, and could be added by a higher-order attitude, is something like approval of the passion, or a desire to be moved by its motivational power. But neither of these gets at what I see as crucial. Suppose I am a teacher in a school and I feel a strong desire that a certain pupil not get a leading role in the school play. Her father is my hated rival, and I can't stand the thought of the pleasure that it would give him to see her in this role. I may judge that this is not in fact a good reason to deny the child the part. I may feel only "disapproval" of the "motivational tendency" of this vengeful thought, and no desire to be moved by it. Yet it is crucial to the "motivational tendency" that it retains that when I think of the play, the pleasure the father would derive from seeing his daughter in the

[8] Ibid., p. 137

limelight keeps presenting itself to me as a reason to prevent this from happening. The *claim* that this desire has on me is not a matter of my approval or endorsement, but of the fact that it consists in something *seeming* to me to be a reason, even though I judge that it is not.

I disagree with Frankfurt, then, at least in holding that most of what we commonly call desires are not first-order desires as he characterizes them. Perhaps this just means that desires as I understand them, and what I have called seemings, are already higher-order phenomena. It is less clear, given the passage discussed in my previous paragraph, how far Frankfurt and I agree about what is essential to these higher-order attitudes. I would not put this in terms of approval and disapproval, but in terms of judgments about what is a good reason and which good reasons to act on. Whether there is disagreement here or not, what I want to do in the remainder of this paper is to show how, using the language of reasons, I would account for some of the things Frankfurt says about necessity, freedom and love.

III

At the beginning of the paragraph that contains the remarks about jealousy and cravings that I quoted above, Frankfurt contrasts these passions with an agent's higher-order attitudes. He writes, "The volitional attitudes that a person maintains toward his own elementary motivational tendencies are entirely up to him." It is certainly common, and natural, to say that the things that belong most clearly to a person are the things that are "up to him." But it is also correct to say, as Frankfurt does repeatedly, that it is essential to being a person that certain things—the things one cares most deeply about—strike one with necessity, as things one *must* care about. This may sound paradoxical, but

it becomes clear that there is in fact no paradox when we ask what is involved in something's being "up to us."

Consider what I have called seemings, assessings, and optings. In what sense are these "up to us," and in what way are they, on the contrary, forced upon us? One sense (a morally important sense, I believe) in which something can be up to us is if it depends on and hence reflects our judgment. Assessings—our reflective judgments about whether certain considerations do or do not count in favor of certain attitudes—are certainly up to us in this sense. They *are* our judgments and hence, trivially, they would be different if our judgments were different. But from the fact that it is up to me in this sense to decide whether something is a reason for a certain action or not, it does not follow that I am free to choose either answer. It is up to me to decide whether the fact that I would break many bones if I were to jump from a moving car counts against opening the door and leaping out at the next turn, but I do not, in another sense, enjoy much freedom in forming this decision. Under the circumstances the answer is so clear that I couldn't decide differently. I am constrained by my perception of the relevant reasons.

Seemings—desires and other states in which considerations appear to me to constitute reasons—are a slightly different case. In one sense, they are not up to me since they do not always arise from my judgment. But since they involve tendencies to see things as reasons, they implicate my judgment. If I were fully rational, then when I judge something not to be a good reason it would cease to seem to me to be one. Alas, we do not invariably have this kind of control. Not only can we not command the "vasty deep" of our (first-order) passions as Frankfurt understands them,[9] we cannot always command

[9] Frankfurt's remark about passions occurs in "The Faintest Passion," in *Necessity, Volition, and Love*, p. 101.

our instinctive judgments. But they are ours nonetheless, and can reflect something about us even when we reject them.

With respect to optings we have an additional degree of freedom. If there are good reasons for me to choose either of two careers, it is "up to me" in a further sense which of them I take up. I can choose either way, and whichever way I choose will be supported by reasons but neither choice is compelled by them. The important point, which Frankfurt emphasizes, is that this extra degree of freedom does not bring with it an added degree of responsibility. Nor does its absence in the other cases—the fact that these judgments are more constrained by reasons and hence less "up to us" in the further sense we are now discussing—make these judgments less fully attributable to us. It is inviting to think that the self is more fully revealed in choices that are less constrained. That this is not always so is due to the fact that what we and others regard as particularly significant about us is the considerations we regard as reasons and how we respond to them. (Here I return to a point made earlier about significance.) Statements such as "He couldn't help it" or "He could not have done anything else" serve to mitigate attributability when the necessities alluded to are ones that prevented the agent's assessment of certain reasons from determining his action. So the action does not show that he failed to care about these things. In other cases, such as Martin Luther's, the same words serve to underscore the degree to which the action was the agent's, because it reflected what he took to be compelling reasons.

It thus seems to me that the framework I have described can give an entirely adequate account of the phenomena of volitional necessity that Frankfurt discusses. He describes, for example, the case of Lord Fawn, in *The Eustace Diamonds* who "had

thought that it would be a good idea" to interrogate Andy Gowran, a lower class estate-steward, about the behavior of Fawn's fiancée on a certain occasion.[10] But when he tries to do this "every feeling of his nature" revolts against it, and he finds that he cannot continue the conversation. What happens in this case, as I would describe it, is that the fact that his intended plan of action would involve discussing such an intimate matter with a coarse person of low class strikes Lord Fawn as an absolutely compelling reason against it. As a conclusion about the reasons he has, this judgment is "up to him" in the first of the senses I distinguished. (As Frankfurt says, "It is not against his *will* that Fawn's feelings revolt.") But he is nonetheless not free to reach an opposite conclusion, and this "necessity" is, as I pointed out above, a common feature of our judgments about reasons.

Let me turn, in closing, to say something about love, which Frankfurt discusses in several of his most recent articles. He is concerned here with love in a broad sense, including not only emotional love for another person but also other deep commitments such as to a place, a cause, or an ideal. Just as I said above about desire, I believe that love in this sense essentially involves seeing certain considerations as reasons. To love something, as Frankfurt says, is to be guided in a certain way by what is good for, or required by, it. Explaining love in terms of reasons may seem hyper-rationalistic. But it seems this way, I believe, only if we fail to distinguish between what love involves (which is what I have been discussing) and the grounds of that love. At least in the case of emotional love, there is often something inappropriate about giving reasons for loving or to think that one needs to give reasons for doing so. (It would not, in a similar way, be

[10] "Rationality and the Unthinkable," in *The Importance of What We Care About*, p. 183.

inappropriate to offer a justification for valuing. There is generally a reason why something is valuable.)[11]

As Frankfurt observes, although love is a contingent matter, it involves a kind of volitional necessity—the lover feels that he or she must do certain things.[12] "The claims of love … possess not simply power but authority."[13] He contrasts this authority with the necessities of reason and duty. I agree that these are different in content. In particular, the requirements of love are not properly understood as a special case of moral obligation. But I would not say, with Frankfurt, that the authority of the demands of love can be traced to the claims of one's identity as a person. He writes that in betraying the object of one's love one therefore betrays oneself as well.[14] If this is correct, it is only when particular stress is put on *as well*. Otherwise, it seems to misdescribe the (no doubt somewhat elusive) division of normative labor between elements that are contingent or in some cases voluntaristic and those that are neither. On the one hand, it is quite true that I can only betray an ideal or beloved if it is *my* ideal, or my beloved. (This is the contingent part.) But when it comes to the crunch, it seems to me that the authority of an ideal comes from my sense of its value, and the thought of betraying my beloved is devastating because it is *she* whom I would betray. Thoughts about *my commitment* to either, or my integrity as a person, seem secondary, and a little too self-referential. This relative emphasis seems, if anything, clearer when the object of love is a person than when it is an ideal. In the latter case, appealing to my commitment as a source of authority seems less

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[11] In this respect Frankfurt's inclusion of ideals as instances of love may push the boundaries of the concept.

[12] "Autonomy, Necessity, and Love," in *Necessity, Volition, and Love,* p. 136.
[13] Ibid., p. 138.
[14] Ibid.

out of place. This is surprising, since love of a person need not be justified, and the adoption of an ideal is more likely to be based on reasons. One might therefore expect these reasons to play a larger role in explaining authority in the latter case. I don't have an explanation for this puzzle.

The view I have been advocating, which finds the motivating force of desires, and now even that of the claims of love, in reasons, may seem absurdly hyper-rationalistic. It may seem to extend the authority of Reason over other aspects of life in way that is very implausible. But I have said nothing about Reason, as a faculty. I have spoken only of *reasons*. I have claimed that desires are best understood as involving taking something to be a reason, but I do not mean by this to suggest that there is some calculative process of reasoning through which we should decide what to desire. What I am offering should not, then, be seen as a defense of the claims of Reason against passion. I am suggesting, rather, that the idea of an opposition between Reason and passion is misconceived. If desires are not to be mere urges, as most of them are not, they must involve seeing something as a reason. So if Reason is involved in every attitude concerning reasons, passion and Reason cannot be two separate capacities.[15]

[15] I am indebted to the participants in the conference at Wake Forest for very helpful discussion and to the editors for their detailed comments on an earlier version of this paper.